



T E X A S ☆ T I M E S

John Cornyn

UNITED STATES SENATOR • TEXAS

## The Cost of Freedom

By U.S. Sen. John Cornyn

During this week exactly 230 years ago, delegates to the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia. Their action led directly to our war for independence and, some 11 hard years later, the U.S. Constitution and the United States of America.

The Declaration laid the foundation for the freedoms and liberties that have made the United States of America the great nation it is today. But independence, and those liberties, did not come easily. They were secured only after years of struggle, and with the assistance of several foreign powers.

These historical facts are particularly relevant during this July 4 week as the Congress debates conduct of our war against terrorism, and our support for the fledgling democracy of Iraq.

Since its founding, the U.S. has become the central beacon for liberty and democracy throughout the world. In the past few decades alone, U.S.-led efforts have freed hundreds of millions of people from the yoke of oppression, in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and elsewhere. We are justifiably proud of our efforts to bring hope to corners of the world where hope did not previously exist.

Our expenditure of lives and treasure around the world has been motivated by more than idealism. Through the 45 years of the Cold War, our leaders in both political parties recognized that tyranny and despotism are inherently aggressive, and will always pose a continuing threat to free people.

They knew the enduring truth of certain wisdom. Freedom is never free. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. They appreciated also the best way to protect America was to oppose aggressive tyranny, and encourage a world of peaceful democracies.

Since September, 2001, we have been fully engaged in a new kind of war, against terrorist guerrillas who want to destroy everything we stand for. Once again, this time under the leadership of President Bush, the U.S. is meeting the new challenge.

Terrorism breeds in an atmosphere where basic human rights are denied and political rights are suppressed. After the progress we've made recently, the Middle East is now the only area of the world virtually bereft of functioning democracy. (Israel is the sole exception.) There is no quick, short-term fix to this enduring problem.

President Bush has a far-sighted strategy to break the cycle of tyranny, despotism and human-rights abuse in that region. Assisting Iraq in establishing itself as a model among the world of democracies is a key component. The strategy is working. Because of our initiative, signs of progress toward expanded human rights and democratic rule can already be seen across the entire Middle East and into Asia.

There is no doubt we are winning. Our military cannot be bested. Iraqis have voted three times – in greater numbers than we vote in the U.S. – and are

steadily planting democratic institutions and restoring order in their country. They are moving to reconcile dissident segments within the country, and to pave the way for our troops to leave.

The United States has never been enthusiastic about going to war. Democracies rarely are. The war on terror promises to be long and costly, and, four years into the struggle, our resolve is being tested. Do we have the national will to see this through?

As we debated Iraq policy in the U.S. Senate late last month, I took note of a State Department publication, "Significant Terrorist Incidents, 1961 to 2003." It is 19 pages long. It shows beyond argument the building threat to democracy, and particularly the U.S., from terrorism. The events listed – the first World Trade Center bombing, attacks on our embassies and diplomatic outposts, even assaults on our warships, culminating in the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks of September 11 – were growing steadily in their severity and boldness.

We are now fighting back, and it's no coincidence that assaults on civilian targets have largely abated. Yet, in the Senate debate, I was struck by the short-term thinking of some Iraq policy opponents. In fact, some characterized their objectives not as protecting the U.S. from threat – but as creating a unified position within their political party. I asked aloud: "Can they be serious?"

I believe the sacrifices this country has made over the years in the cause of freedom are extremely unfortunate, but worth their cost. I believe not that war is tragic and must never be fought, but that war is tragic but must sometimes be fought for compelling reasons.

We in Texas continue to mourn Pfc. Kristian Menchaca, of Houston and the Rio Grande Valley, who was killed by terrorists on June 19 near Baghdad, as he served his country. I am grateful there are men and women like Pfc. Menchaca and other Texans who will place themselves in harm's way and risk making the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom.

As we celebrate our Independence Day this week, we should remember Pfc. Menchaca and his family. And we should take pride in the leadership the U.S. is taking in the global war on terror. The sacrifices being made now are our best hope to protect our safety, and safeguard our liberty in the future.

*Sen. Cornyn is a member of the following Senate Committees: Armed Services, Judiciary, Budget, Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and Joint Economic. He is the chairman of the subcommittees on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship and Emerging Threats and Capabilities. Cornyn served previously as Texas Attorney General, Texas Supreme Court Justice and Bexar County District Judge.*

For Sen. Cornyn's previous Texas Times columns: [www.cornyn.senate.gov/column](http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/column)